

Saga

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

CHAPTER
SEVENTEEN



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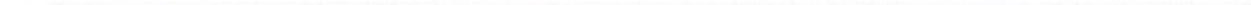
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Quiet.

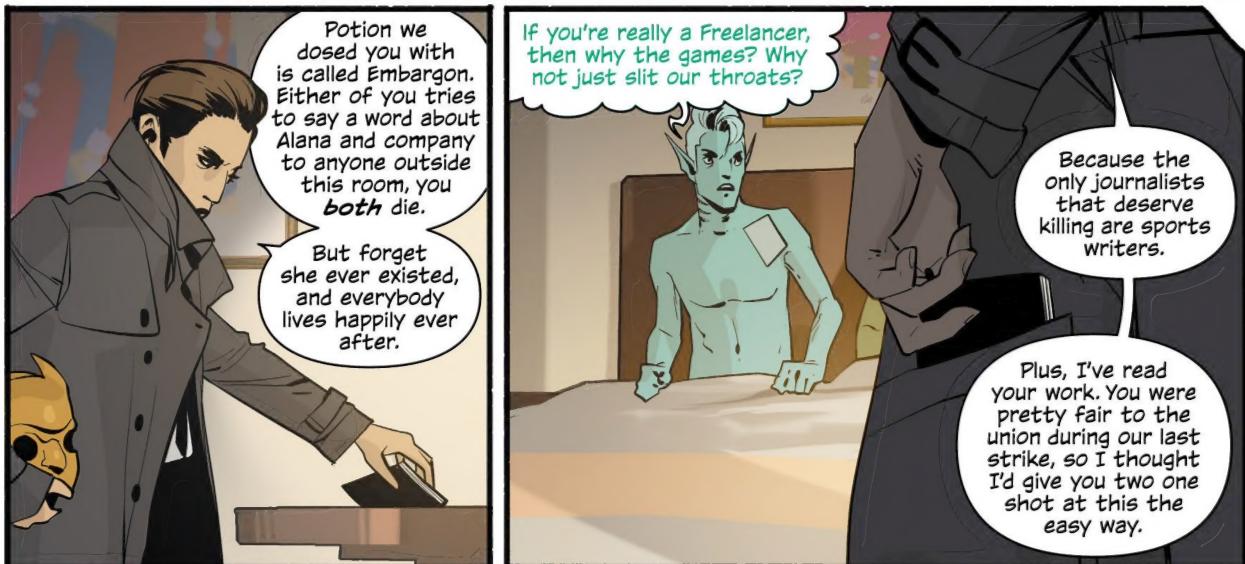
You say so, but the paper's gonna be pissed if we take a rental all the way to Quietus just to come back with a puff piece about some cult novelist.

DOFF?

I think there's someone in here.









It's the
stories with
no sides
that worry
them.



Here's the thing,
everybody loves babies...
but only in very, VERY
small doses.



My parents and I had spent
an entire week inside the
cosmic lighthouse of
D. Oswald Heist.



It was starting to look
like we'd overstayed
our welcome.



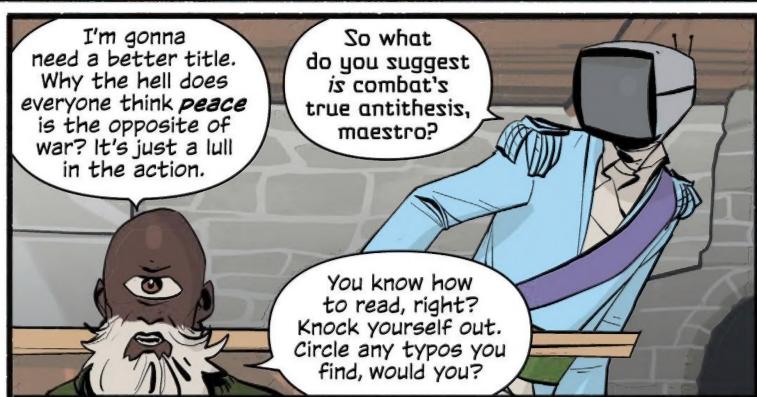
Enough of
this, I have to
help him.

Klara, you *swore* to
Mister Heist we'd stay
hidden until he gave
the all clear.

Alana's right.
Our first priority
has to be protecting
Hazel. We have no
idea if whoever's down
there even knows
we're here.

He
doesn't.







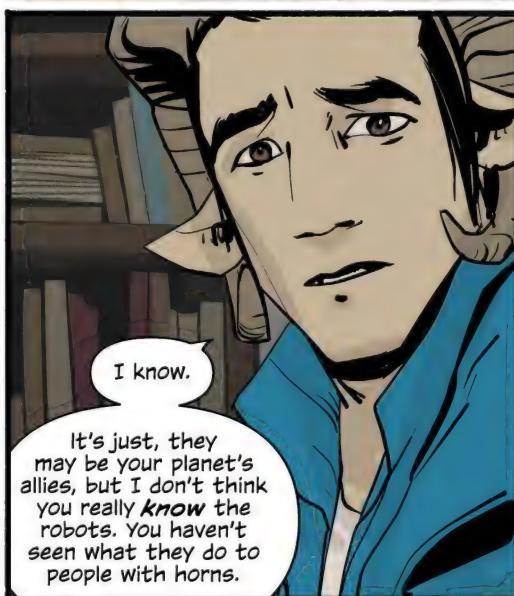




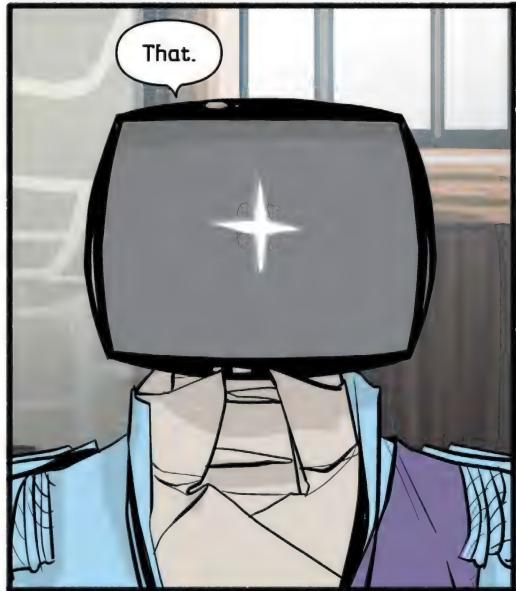


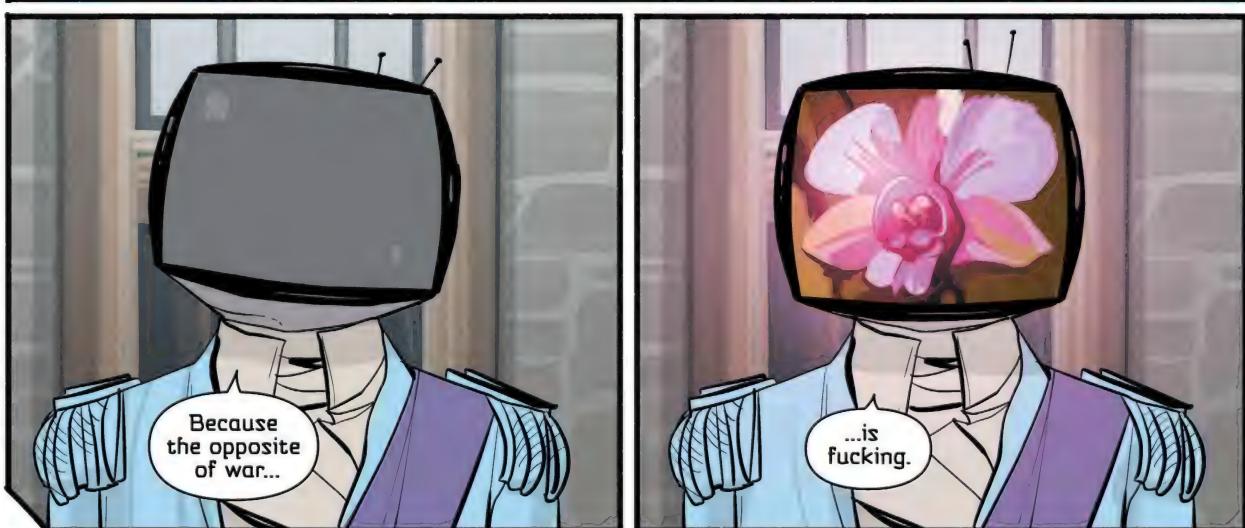
Oswald is an eccentric hermit with savings. I refuse to believe he doesn't have at least **one** secret passageway in this place.























TO BE CONTINUED

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Like Casey Kasem being forced to transition from a dead dog dedication to a “fucking up-tempo song,” so too must we now segue from this issue’s somber proceedings to our usual letter column buffoonery.

Hello, Brian Vaughan here. I think we’re just barely sneaking this one in under the 2013 wire, but we’ve finally got the “results” of our second annual Reader Survey. Thanks to the thousands of you who were interesting enough to scribble in your comics and use stamps to show us the results.

But before we get to your responses, does anyone else remember a television episode (or perhaps an installment of a filmed horror anthology) from the 1980s or maybe early 90s about the world’s most accomplished strangling hitman (?!), who ends the story by (spoiler alert for possible nonexistent tale) triumphantly choking himself to death?

Does anybody know what the hell I’m talking about? I didn’t just make this up, did I? I’ve tried researching it on the internet, but all that’s gotten me is a thick file at Interpol. If I’m not completely out of my mind and you have any info to share, please drop a line to the address at the top of this page.

And now, on with our show...

2013 SAGA READER SURVEY OFFICIAL AND LEGALLY BINDING RESULTS

1) In the parlance of these newfangled “chat rooms,” what is your A/S/L?

This was the one question I actually cared about, but almost a fifth of you kids/senior citizens were too stymied by my AOL-era lingo to respond with your correct age, sex and location. Way to be an idiot, Vaughan.

But if those of you who did respond are any indication, this book’s audience is rapidly approaching an even split of female/male readers, with only sixty percent of this year’s survey answerers being dudes. And at least three of you out there volunteered that you’re transgendered, though I suspect you are not alone. Most of you are somewhere between 22 and 30 years old, and your youth and vigor terrify me.

We didn’t get any responses from Utah for the 2012 survey, but the Beehive State (that can’t be correct) dispatched many fine ambassadors this year, as did the great nation of Australia, which sent almost as many survey results as our neighbors in Canada. Does this mean Fiona and I can come to Australia now, please?

2) And if you don’t mind us asking, where do you buy your comical books?

While the digital revolution continues to transform our medium every day, retailers will be relieved to hear that at least most

of our readers continue to buy their books in the local stores we all love so much.

As a matter of fact, many of you ARE retailers (or loyal employees), so major props to the fine folks at World’s Best Comics in Sacramento, JP Comics & Games in Boston, and Brian’s Comics in Petaluma (thanks for the awesome shirt!), just to name a few killer stores from this stack of responses.

3) Okay, but when was the last time you climbed a rope and/or used a rope to aid your ascent?

The most common answers were a) Never, b) Grade school physical education, and c) When I was drunk a few night ago, but Christy S. from Austin replied, “When I was in Marine Corps boot camp. I was appallingly bad at it—both ascending and descending. I personally think it’s a highly overrated skill. At no time in my subsequent five years in the Corps did I ever have the need to climb or descend a rope. Using a rifle - highly useful skill. Rope climbing - not so much.”

4) Do you believe in any kind of afterlife?

This was split right down the middle. Exactly fifty percent of you are certain there’s something after all this (heaven, reincarnation, rejoining star carbon), while fifty percent of you are entirely sure there’s nothing. Who’s correct? Stay tuned, True Believers.

5) Who’s the most famous person you went to school with?

I just picked up a survey that lists “astronaut Mary Cleave” as an answer to this question, which is really cool, because I didn’t know Hazel’s fictional birthplace shared a name with such an accomplished scientist. And then I flipped over the survey and saw that it was sent in by my own aunt, Carolyn Vaughan! How crazy is that? What, not that crazy at all? Oh, leave me alone.

Anyway, hi, Aunt Carolyn! Thanks for not answering the next question.

6) In adolescent sex talk, what does “third base” represent to you?

Okay, we’re going to need some sort of national referendum on this, because you people have WILDLY divergent opinions about your bases, with third representing everything from “heavy petting” to “sighting of occupants in and around the craft” (which I believe is the technical definition a close encounter of the third kind).

7) President Obama probably hasn’t had too much free

time since he was elected, so which (non-Saga) comics that have been released in the last five years would you most recommend to him?

Adam from Phoenix replies, "He can just flip through the NSA's records about my Comixology buying habits if he's interested."

Be that as it may, Adam, the most recommended comic by far was Jonathan Hickman and Nick Dragotta's terrific *East Of West*, followed by usual suspects *The Walking Dead*, *Chew*, *Batman*, *Conan* and *Ultimate Spider-Man*, with a surprising number of you also recommending Mark Siegel's *Sailor Twain*, which I really have to read.

And San Francisco reader Rasha W. broadened my horizons with her response: "Trust me on this, as a fellow Pacific Rim hapa Prez O would enjoy *Black Lagoon* by Rei Hiroe, *Children Of The Sea* by Daisuke Igarashi, *Sayonara Zetsubo-Sensei* by Koi Kumeta, *Domin-8 Me!* By Seeyu Takemura, *Love & Hate* by Enomoto Heights, and *Yotsuba & !!* by Kiyohiko Azume."

8) It's your final meal; what would you like to drink with that?

Christopher C. from Cleveland answers correctly but grossly with, "My lover's sloppy heavy kiss."

9) On Star Trek: The Next Generation, which two characters had a never-acknowledged love affair that only you know about?

A dispiriting majority of you said that you couldn't even hazard a guess because you don't know anything about this "old show," but maybe it's because you don't know anything about love, have you fucking millennials stopped to think about that?

Anyway, David Lott from Spokane replied, "Worf's prune juice and Picard's Earl Grey tea... hot!" and because of that, he is better than us all.

10) What's the best thing you've ever stolen?

"A dessert plate from my nephew's wedding in New York City in 2004."

Dammit, Aunt Carolyn!

11) Who or what do you miss?

Ugh, this was a parade of misery:

"Having complete faith in my partner." "Seeing my son when he has to stay at his mom's." "Worlds that were created that are no longer being built upon, like *Calvin & Hobbes*, *Carnivale*, and the glory days of Super Nintendo RPGs."

12) Have you ever had a possible supernatural experience, and if so, what happened?

A lot of you wrote in describing an experience where you woke up but couldn't move your body, and saw a figure (usually dressed in black) at the edge of your bed (I saw Darth Vader when this happened to me back in college). I hate to be all Agent Scully, but we were simply experiencing a harmless and non-supernatural medical phenomenon called

"sleep paralysis." Look it up, superstitious nerds!

A couple from Chicago wrote in to say, "We gave each other the same book one Christmas, which was really freaky." Whoa, now that defies all explanation!

And Jordon from Los Angeles writes, "I took psychedelic mushrooms and closed my eyes. A grid developed and there was true depth in my mind's eye. All sound soon disappeared from my surroundings and a faint light appeared far out in the distance of this newly created space. It was like a star that twinkled and made its existence known to me. I thought I saw something higher than me, something I wasn't supposed to see."

Which reminds me, where the hell can I get some psychedelic mushrooms?

13) Do you know anyone currently in prison?

Man, I read fifty surveys in a row that all answered this in the affirmative, and the first one to say no was sent in by L.C. from Pennsylvania, who added "though my brother-in-law works in a prison, but that's it."

14) Which field or fields do you consider yourself an expert in?

I used this question to help assemble my own *Global Frequency*-like cabal of brilliant *Saga* readers who might be able to help get me out of future jams, like A.V. from San Francisco, who writes, "I can definitely sew up a simple laceration on a meaty, non-tensioned part of the body." Thankfully, every part of my body is meaty and non-tensioned, so into my database your precious contact info goes...

15) Have you ever been given an award?

Lots of you have trophies on your shelves, but perhaps none more impressive than Abe Thomas of South Bend, Indiana, who rightfully boasts, "I won a Harry Potter trivia contest when I was twelve and got a little plaque thing."

16) Has Twitter made you a happier person?

#WhyDidEVERYONESayNoToThisQuestion?

17) What did your parents almost name you?

"Donald. My last name is McDonald." —Anonymous from Orlando

18) Did you watch any of those videos that Chelsea Manning helped leak, especially that one?

Maybe it's because Fonografiks thoughtfully changed her name from Bradley to Chelsea as we were going to press, but very few of you had heard of this Army intelligence analyst who helped leak information about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Originally charged with "aiding the enemy," she's currently serving 35 years in prison for releasing videos like this one, which you should most definitely not watch under any circumstances:

<http://bit.ly/11dByZ8>

19) If you had to fight in any war from human history, which would you choose?

Lots of picks for that old favorite World War II, but reader Rob G. responded, "The Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896, because Wikipedia swears it only lasted around forty minutes." An anonymous female reader from Richmond selected "the Spanish Civil War, on the side of the Republicans. They were decent in terms of gender equality and maybe I'd meet a famous writer." And Dick L. from Prescott, Arizona says, "I did pretty okay in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Yeah, some guys got blown up, but I made it home in one piece... physically, at least."

20) Isn't there someone you should finally apologize to this week?

I'd like to apologize to Fonografiks for not getting him this letter column document earlier. Sorry, man, my office is a wasteland of torn-open envelopes and semi-legible handwriting.

21) What is the most important article of clothing that you own?

A reader named Ginger asks, "Would it be sucking up to say my Lying Cat tee? I meet the most fascinating people every day that I wear it." Thanks, Ginger, and yes, that is sucking up.

22) Are you happily addicted to anything?

Caffeine, comics, and video games were the three most popular choices, but Nick from Philadelphia says, "Doing psilocybin mushrooms with my girlfriend. I fall in love with her all over again every time we trip together."

Seriously, where the fuck does a guy get his hands on these things?

23) We're having a dance! Would you like to come to our dance?

Stephen from Kansas City claims, "I imagine 90% of readers will respond 'I don't dance.' Myself included. Thanks for the invite though!"

Actually, Stephen, I've just read hundreds of responses, and yours was literally the FIRST that was anything less than hugely enthusiastic about the prospects of a dance. I'd just included this question as a stupid placeholder, but the response was so overwhelming, part of me wonders... SHOULD we have a dance? If so, when and where?

Does anyone's Dad have access to, like, an old VFW Hall we could rent out for an evening? Just tell him it's for something called the Sextillion Cotillion...

24) You have to permanently give up either movies or television, so what's it gonna be?

Insert one thousand mean-spirited jokes about *Under The Dome* here, you dicks!

25) Finally, please draw a quick doodle of yourself, especially if you're not an artist:

100% of you cowards begged me not to share your self-portraits with anyone, but holy shit, a lot of you are REALLY talented, like, should-probably-be-doing-something-with-this-talent talented. But even if your avatar was just made of sticks, you are all lovely human beings, and it was an honor to get to see a few of the faces who help keep our ongoing series going on.

On behalf of the whole crew, thanks again to everyone who took the time to complete this year's survey. I hope you have a happy, healthy, mushroom-filled rest of your 2013, and maybe we'll see a few of you back here in one short month for the surprising conclusion to Hazel's third arc.

Awaiting your strangulation assistance,
Brian



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